



Superfund and You

The Superfund Process - Part 1

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) investigation and cleanup work in Libby is being conducted under the Superfund Law, formally known as the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA). There are two different authorities or programs under this law, the *Removal* Program and the *Remedial* Program. Removal Program actions are typically cleanups that are begun quickly to address immediate health risks and time-sensitive situations, while Remedial Program actions address both immediate and long-term health risks and are not limited in duration or expenditures. In Libby, EPA is using both programs to continue site investigation, address health risks and conduct cleanup.

Removal Program

In November 1999, EPA began an emergency response action to protect public health in Libby. The first priority was to address current risk to public health from asbestos-contaminated vermiculite by cleaning up, or removing the largest and worst sources of contamination.

EPA issued an Action Memo in May 2000. This decision-document authorized immediate cleanup of source areas based on endangerment. Through that memo (and its amendments), EPA has safely and thoroughly cleaned up the former vermiculite processing facilities, several Libby schools, and 370 residential and commercial properties. This work includes investigation, yard excavation, interior dust cleaning, attic insulation removal, limited demolition, disposal at the mine site and at a special asbestos disposal cell at the landfill, and restoration. EPA expects to complete at least 170 additional cleanups in 2005.

Remedial Program

In October 2002, Libby became a National Priorities List (NPL) site, making it eligible to receive additional federal funds for cleanup. In 2002 and 2003, EPA conducted the Contaminant Screening Study (CSS), taking samples at approximately 4200 residences and businesses in Libby. The data we gathered is being used in the Remedial Investigation and Risk Assessment which EPA is now preparing for Libby.

Drawing on the Remedial Investigation and Risk Assessment, EPA plans to issue a Proposed Plan for remedial action by December 2005. There will be a formal public comment period on the Plan. After considering and responding to public comments, a Record of Decision (ROD) will specify exactly what cleanup activities can and will be done under Superfund. EPA can only do what is authorized in the Action Memo and the ROD.

EPA encourages you to respond to the postcard survey sent out last month. The results will help us improve communication with area residents. If you didn't get one, you can pick one up at the EPA Information Center, at 501 Mineral Ave. The Information Center (293-6194) can be a resource for you if you have questions or would like to review site information. You can also call me, Wendy Thomi, EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator, at 1-866-457-2690 (toll free). Finally, EPA's website for Libby is located at: www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby. Next month's column will focus on the Superfund decision-making process in Libby.